

Message Text

SECRET

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70

ACTION INR-11

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 NEA-14 ISO-00 IO-14 SAJ-01 SCCT-02

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FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1729

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

USINT BAGHDAD

DIA WASHDC

S E C R E T MOSCOW 12618

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR PINR MARR UR XF

SUBJ: MIDDLE EAST MILITARY POSTURES: THE SOVIET ANGLE

NO FOREIGN DISSEM

REF: STATE 177005; TEL AVIV 4647

1. WE DOUBT THAT SOVIETS WOULD SEE A RENEWAL OF MIDDLE EAST HOSTILITIES AS IN THEIR INTEREST AT THIS POINT. TO THE EXTENT THAT THEY MAY BE STIMULATING TENSIONS IN THE AREA, WE WOULD ATTRIBUTE THIS--AS SUGGESTED IN REFTEL A-- TO SOVIET DESIRE TO EMPHASIZE THE IMPORTANCE AND URGENCY OF GETTING THE GENEVA NEGOTIATIONS MOVING AGAIN.

2. WE ARE NOT PERSUADED THAT THEIR RIFT WITH EGYPT HAS CAUSED

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THE SOVIETS TO MAKE A FUNDAMENTAL REASSESSMENT OF THEIR INTERESTS

IN THE MIDDLE EAST. WE DOUBT THAT THEY HAVE WRITTEN OFF EGYPT WHERE THEIR POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC INVESTMENT REMAINS LARGE. IN OUR VIEW THEIR CURRENT COOLNESS TOWARD CAIRO PROBABLY INVOLVES IN PART A DECISION TO LIE LOW IN THE EXPECTATION THAT SOME OF THE BLOOM WILL COME OFF THE NEW US-EGYPTIAN RELATIONSHIP. IF THIS IS THEIR THINKING, THEY WOULD NOT BE INCLINED TO ENCOURAGE SYRIAN BELLICOSITY IN THE FACE OF STRONG EGYPTIAN OBJECTIONS TO ANOTHER ROUND OF FIGHTING. MOREOVER, THE CURRENT EGYPTIAN COMMITMENT TO THE NEGOTIATING TRACK NO DOUBT REDUCES THE CHANCES OF A COORDINATED ARAB TWO-FRONT STRATEGY, A FACTOR WHICH INCREASES THE POSSIBILITY OF ARAB MILITARY EMBARRASSMENT IN A NEW WAR--SOMETHING THE SOVIETS WOULD NOT WANT TO SEE.

3. FROM ALL WE CAN GATHER, DESPITE THEIR CONCERN ABOUT RE-ACTIVATING GENEVA, THE SOVIETS REMAIN INVOLVED IN CARVING OUT FOR THEMSELVES AS LARGE A PIECE OF THE DIPLOMATIC ACTION AS THEY CAN. THEIR INCREASED SUPPORT FOR ARAFAT DURING THE PLO LEADER'S RECENT VISIT IS AN ILLUSTRATION OF THIS. OF COURSE, IF THEY DECIDE THAT GENEVA IS A DEAD LETTER--AND THEIR DIPLOMATIC PROSPECTS CORRESPONDINGLY NULLIFIED--THEIR WHOLE ATTITUDE COULD CHANGE, AND IN A MORE DANGEROUS DIRECTION. WE DO NOT THINK THEY HAVE REACHED THAT POINT.

4. NONE OF THE FOREGOING SHOULD BE TAKEN TO MEAN THAT THE SOVIETS WOULD HAVE MUCH ABILITY--OR INDEED INCLINATION-- TO APPLY STRONG COUNTERVAILING PRESSURES ON THE SYRIANS IF THEY DECIDED TO REOPEN HOSTILITIES.
STOESSEL

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NNN

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